

Light...

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... on Jesus Christ

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**A special issue of the bi-monthly magazine
Light on a New World**

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Light on Jesus Christ

INTRODUCTION

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE of Light on a New World is published to coincide with the end of 2,000 years from the birth of Jesus and the beginning of a new Millennium. There is no other man who has made such an impact on the history of the world as Jesus Christ! No other man can claim to have the calendar set from the time of his birth - the dating of history from BC and AD - a time line which stretches backwards and forwards from the date of his coming into the world.

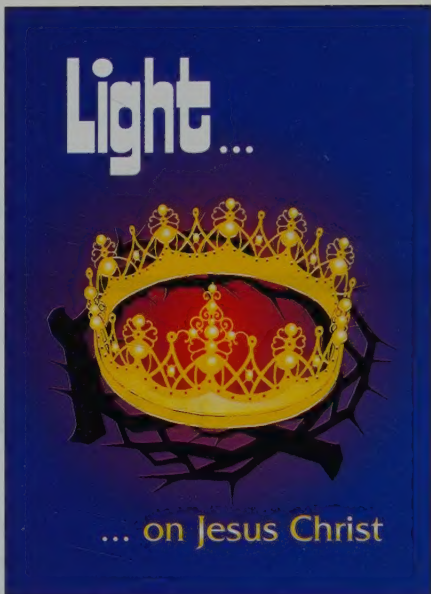
During the two Millennia since Christ's birth, history also witnesses that many people have been influenced by his teaching, living faithful and rewarding lives. Sadly it has to be said, that many others have carried out barbarous acts of cruelty and oppression while mis-using the name of Christ to justify their behaviour. It must also be said that we have now reached a point in time, when people are celebrating the new Millennium for the wrong reasons. The name of Christ is often used blasphemously, particularly in the English speaking world. The message of Christianity is ridiculed by many and Christ's teaching is dismissed as something not relevant to the 21st century.

The following articles have been written to remind our readers of the great purpose of God centred in Jesus Christ. He is the focal point of God's plan of salvation for the world. The human race without exception, is subject to sin, disease and death and the need for salvation has not diminished. The Bible tells us that Jesus came into the world to remedy this situation and the aim of this special issue is to demonstrate it's teaching concerning the work of Jesus both

in the past, the present and the future. Jesus the Son of God, was chosen to be the Saviour of the world and his mission encompasses a number of different roles including those of a Prophet, Priest and King.

As the world in general celebrates the end of one Millennium and the beginning of another, we urge you to think again about Jesus Christ, to consider seriously his life, his mission and his impact on the world.

We also urge you to consider seriously your own position at this eventful time in history. The future belongs to Jesus Christ and our own future is dependant on our relationship to him.



In this uncertain world one thing is very certain as the Bible tells us:

‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.’
[Hebrews 13.8 NKJV]

Read on thoughtfully, dear friends.

Jesus

- The Messiah

'*WE HAVE FOUND the Messiah*' [John 1.41 NKJV] was how Andrew conveyed the news of his encounter with Jesus to his brother Peter. The Gospel record of John explains that 'the Messiah' is, by interpretation, 'the Christ' and the marginal note in many Bibles indicates that both 'Messiah' and 'Christ' mean simply 'The Anointed.' A short time later, Philip, another resident of Bethsaida where Andrew and Peter lived, sought out his friend Nathanael with the same news:

'...We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

[John 1.45]

In his book, 'The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' the nineteenth century scholar Alfred Edersheim lists 456 Old Testament passages which Jewish rabbinical writers deemed to be applicable to the Messiah - the Anointed One! The long list begins in the earliest chapters of Genesis and ends with Malachi's prophecy of '*the Sun of righteousness*.' [Malachi 4.2] What then do the Jewish scriptures (our Old Testament) reveal about the coming of Messiah?

A KING, A PROPHET...AND A PRIEST

When Nathanael acknowledged Jesus as the '*King of Israel*', [John 1.49] he was reflecting the Jewish expectation that 'The Anointed' would emerge as their king. Thirty years earlier, when wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem asking: '*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*' [Matthew 2.2] the chief priests and scribes had a ready answer from the prophecy of Micah:

‘And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.’

[Matthew 2.6 - quoted from Micah 5.2]

In bygone days, certain kings of Israel were sometimes described as ‘*the LORD’s anointed.*’ [1 Samuel 24.6] Such kings were among three classes of Israelites who were ‘*anointed*’ of God. God’s ‘Anointed’ then, would certainly be a king.

A prophet could also be God’s ‘*anointed.*’ [Psalm 105.15] So, of course, ‘The Anointed’ would be a prophet, for had not Moses declared: ‘*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me.*’ [Deuteronomy 18.15]

However, anointing was most commonly associated with the consecration of priests. [Exodus 30.30] The Law of Moses was very emphatic: such priests could only be drawn from the descendants of Aaron, [Exodus 29.9; 30.30-33] from the tribe of Levi. Whereas the scriptures were equally clear that ‘The Anointed,’ as a king, would come from the tribe of Judah! [Genesis 49.10; Micah 5.2] How then could ‘The Anointed’ be a priest as well as a king?

MELCHIZEDEK

We must go back in time to the days of Abraham the father of the Jewish people. 1,900 years before Christ, Abram (as he was still called at the time) had pursued and defeated an alliance of Mesopotamian kings. On his return, he was met by Melchizedek the king of Salem:

‘And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.’ [Genesis 14.18-20]

Here was a king of Salem (Jerusalem) who was also a priest and his name, Melchizedek, means ‘King of righteousness.’ Melchizedek pronounced blessings upon Abram and received tithes from him; a sign that the priesthood of

Melchizedek was of a higher standing than that of Aaron, Abram's descendant. [Hebrews 7.1-10] No wonder that the record of this encounter was not among the 456 passages in Edersheim's list! The coming of 'The Anointed' would signal the end of the Law of Moses:

'For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.'

[Hebrews 7.14]

What of the fact that Melchizedek '*brought forth bread and wine?*' Was it not a portent of the time when Christ would declare that these very same symbols represented his body and his blood? It would be 900 years before this pattern was repeated, in another king, David - anointed first by Samuel the prophet, and then by all Israel:

'Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward...' [1 Samuel 16.13]

'So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron...and they anointed David king over Israel.' [2 Samuel 5.1-3]

As king of Israel, David captured Jerusalem, establishing it as his capital. [2 Samuel 5.6-9] He then withstood a Philistine invasion and decimated the Philistine armies in the process. [2 Samuel 5.17-25] But David was not satisfied; the Ark of God, the symbol of God's presence among His people was not yet in its rightful place. [Psalm 132.1-5]

'So David went and brought up the ark of God...into the city of David with gladness. And...he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod...And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. And he dealt among all the people...to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine...'

[2 Samuel 6.12-14,18,19]

David '*the LORD's anointed*' - vanquisher of Israel's enemies, was now reigning in Jerusalem. His standing as a prophet is attested to by many of the Psalms. And now David, king and prophet, had assumed the role of priest! He wore '*a linen ephod*,' a garment associated with the priesthood and offered sacrifices. There again was the bread and the wine! David's reign as king of Israel and his supremacy over his Gentile enemies anticipated the coming of Messiah:

'The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed...Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.'

[Psalm 2.2-6]



The river Jordan, north of Galilee

'Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him' [Matthew 3.13]

This was what Israel expected of their Messiah. It could only be 'The Anointed,' to whom the Psalm referred, for it continued:

'...the LORD hath said unto me, Thou are my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'

[Psalm 2.7-9]

How eagerly must the Jews of Christ's day have looked forward to such a national champion to bring an end to the Roman occupation. How bitterly disappointed they would be with a 'Messiah' who failed to do that.

A SUFFERING MESSIAH?

One commentator has observed: *'The portrait of an afflicted and suffering Messiah is too minutely sketched by the Psalmist, by Isaiah, by Zechariah and Daniel to be ignored even by reluctant Jews.'* But the discrepancy between the concept of 'The Anointed' as a victorious king and the many Old Testament passages, which portrayed a very different role, was too great for most Jews to come to terms with. For example we read in the Psalms:

'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' [Psalm 16.10]

This was a stark indication that before the '**Holy One**' would reign in glory, he would first lie in the grave, awaiting resurrection. Another Psalm speaks of 'The Anointed' as '*David my servant*,' the Hebrew name David meaning 'Beloved.' Once again the glorious future reign of 'The Anointed' is preceded by a time of suffering, when he himself would be in need of salvation:

'I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him...He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.'

[Psalm 89.20,26,27]

The verses which follow in this Psalm make it clear that 'The Anointed' would not suffer because of his own sins, but for the sins of others; an important distinction which is confirmed by the prophet Isaiah:

'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' [Isaiah 53.5,6]

Perhaps the most explicit indication that 'The Anointed' would die, comes in the prophecy of Daniel, where it is stated that at a predetermined time, 'shall Messiah be cut off.' [Daniel 9.26] On the basis of this prophecy many Jews in Christ's day were expecting the Messiah to appear at that time. How many of them took note of that sober pronouncement that 'The Messiah' - their anointed king was to die?

A KING AND A PRIEST FOR EVER

It was through David, in his capacity as a prophet, that God established the link between the ancient king/priest Melchizedek and 'The Messiah.'

'The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' [Psalm 110.4]

'The Messiah' would, like Melchizedek, combine the offices of a king, a priest and a prophet. He would be a king and a priest for ever; there would be no successors. With the invaluable aid of the New Testament commentary on these verses, it is possible to learn more from this Psalm:

'The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' [Psalm 110.1]

Sitting was an entirely appropriate posture for a king; but how could 'God's Anointed' function thus as a priest? The Epistle to the Hebrews supplies the answer:

'And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, **sat down** on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.'

[Hebrews 10.11-13]

Christ's status as a priest would continue for ever, but when he was raised to sit as king at God's right hand, his priestly work would largely have been

accomplished: there would be no more sacrifices to offer. Only then would come the time when he, like his forefather David, would reign in Zion, acclaimed by all Israel as their king, triumphant over his enemies.

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST

To see Christ foreshadowed in the lives and circumstances of men like Melchizedek and David is not to suggest that 'The Anointed' would be simply another in a succession of great figures in Israel's history. There were many in that long history who were anointed as kings, as prophets and as priests but 'The Anointed' would have unique status above all others:

'Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' [Psalm 45.7]

God had told Moses that He would raise up a prophet '*like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth...*' [Deuteronomy 18.18] But Christ would speak with an authority that even Moses could not command; the Apostle Peter declared that '*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost (Spirit) and with power.*' [Acts 10.38] On a sabbath day, 1,500 years after the time of Moses, Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth and read from the prophecy of Isaiah:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'

[Luke 4.16-19 - quoted from Isaiah 61.1,2]

However reluctantly, his fellow Galileans in Nazareth and later in Capernaum, were forced to concede that here was a man who spoke as if the Scriptures had been written with him in mind:

'And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth...And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power...' [Luke 4.21,22,32]

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Jews were not mistaken in their expectation that their 'Messiah' - 'The Anointed' would be their king. Their understanding was however, incomplete. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see that the Old Testament contains a wealth of detail concerning the 'Messiah.' Coming as a prophet, he would '*preach good tidings,*' proclaiming '*liberty to the captives*' [Isaiah 61.1] -not those in subjection to the Romans, but those under the domination of sin. At his first appearing, he would not be accepted by his fellow Jews. As a result, the '*acceptable year of the LORD*' would quickly give way to the '*day of vengeance of our God*' [Isaiah 61.2] As a priest, he would offer a unique sacrifice, himself, reconciling both Jews and Gentiles to God.

Jesus is now in heaven, at the right hand of God, and will soon return to the earth as Israel's king. Sadly, with hundreds of Old Testament passages to draw upon, the Jews of Christ's day had formed a picture of the 'Anointed One' which could not accommodate Christ when he came! There is a lesson here for our own days.

Without doubt the finest discourse on this subject was delivered by Christ himself to two of his disciples on the afternoon of his resurrection. Joining them on their journey to the village of Emmaus (and with his identity concealed), he quickly dispelled their despondency over his recent crucifixion:

'...O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. [Luke 24.25-27]

The substance of this conversation has not been recorded; later generations would have the New Testament as their guide. But Christ is here confirming for us, that there is a treasure-house of valuable information about 'The Messiah' - the Lord's 'Anointed,' to be found in that often neglected part of our Bibles that we call the Old Testament.

Stephen Camplin
Newfoundland, Canada

Jesus

- The Prophet

WE TEND TO think of the role of a prophet in terms of someone who can foretell the future. When we study the Bible we find that the mission and message of Israel's prophets were much wider than this. In Old Testament times the prophets of Israel were great teachers, directing the people to obey the laws of their God and warning them of the consequences of disobedience. Some of these warnings were spoken in prophetic language, foretelling future events.

Some of the prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah are well known for their predictions concerning the coming of Christ. It may surprise you to know that Abraham was counted as a prophet, as we learn from the book of Genesis. *[Genesis 20.7]* So was Moses, the great leader of Israel; also Samuel the last of Israel's judges. Saul and David, the first two kings of Israel, were also described as prophets. Towards the end of the monarchy a number of prophets were sent to the nation of Israel in an effort to halt the moral and religious decline of the Jewish people. They warned the people of impending disaster if they continued along that path. The prophets were guided by God to foretell future events - the fall of Jerusalem, the captivity in Babylon and the eventual partial restoration to their own land. These were what we might call short-term prophecies and they were fulfilled sometimes within a year or maybe a few years later. Only a prophet speaking under Divine inspiration could have predicted these events. Some like Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied during their captivity and foretold events many hundreds of years in advance.

We can now begin to appreciate the role of the prophets in the religious life of the nation of Israel. Their unique position is summed up in some words of the Apostle Peter:

'knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.' *[2 Peter 1.20,21 NKJV]*

THE GREATEST PROPHET

There are four important points concerning the role of Israel's prophets:

1. They received a specific and personal call from God.
2. They were sent by God to the people with a specific mission.
3. They proclaimed a Divinely inspired message.
4. They set an example of godliness in their teaching and way of life.

Now Moses foretold the coming of the greatest prophet of all in these words:

'I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.'

[Deuteronomy 18.18]

There is no doubt that the prophet like Moses is the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is an amazing long-term prophecy which the Apostle Peter called to mind in his preaching to the Jews at Jerusalem. He quoted from the writings of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy and urged his hearers to consider Jesus and his great work as a prophet and much more than a prophet as demonstrated by the other articles in this publication. *[Acts 3.22-24]* The Apostle Peter then made an appeal to the Jews which contains a very important message for us:

'Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.'

[Acts 3.25]

In these words is the essence of the Divine plan to bless all nations through the mission of that great descendant of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here also is a prophetic warning, both to the Jews who heard that powerful message nearly 2,000 years ago and to all mankind - to repent of past sins and to be converted to the true Christian faith *[Acts 3.19]* and why?

So that we may become associated with that truly great promise which was made to Abraham the friend of God.

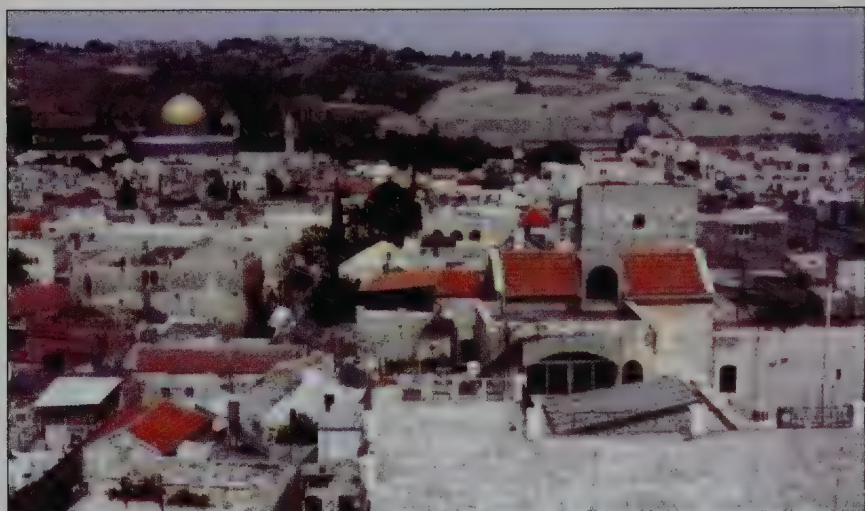
CALLING AND MISSION

The mission of Jesus and his role as the prophet like Moses is clearly indicated in the teaching of Peter in the book of Acts chapter 3. Just think about those four essential features of the prophet's work mentioned above and with the aid of scripture we can see how Jesus measured up to his great calling:

1. Jesus had a personal calling from God. This was confirmed in those words from heaven at his baptism: *'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'* [Matthew 3.17]
2. Jesus had a specific mission. He said on one occasion: *'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'* [Matthew 15.24]
3. Jesus proclaimed a Divine message. He said to the Jews of his day: *'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.'* [John 7.16]
4. Jesus set the highest example of godliness in his teaching and way of life - a pattern for his true disciples to copy in their lives.

Many of his contemporaries did recognise Jesus as a great prophet as we can see from the New Testament records. [Matthew 21.11; Luke 24.19] But recognising him is not enough. True Christianity is much more than that. Jesus said to his disciples on one occasion: *'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'* [John 17.3]

This knowledge can only come through a careful study of the Word of God and our salvation depends on it. The passage in Matthew's Gospel record referred to earlier, indicated that Jesus was sent *'unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'* This is a surprising statement - but very true. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the Bible is a collection of Jewish writings recording the history of God's people, the nation of Israel and containing throughout both Old and New Testaments a consistent theme - a golden thread which binds the whole together as the **inspired Word of God**. That theme is God's plan for the world - the salvation of mankind from death, which is centred in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the past present and future.



View of the Mount of Olives from the Old City of Jerusalem

‘And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives - Jesus answered’

[Matthew 24.3 -5]

JESUS - THE ANOINTED

Jesus himself was a Jew, descended from Abraham the father of the Jewish race. *[Matthew 1.1]* His mission was first to the Jews, his fellow-countrymen, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets. The Jews of Christ’s day were looking for the one they called ‘The Messiah’. They were expecting the fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies such as the words of Isaiah:

‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.’ *[Isaiah 9.6,7]*

The immediate disciples of Jesus were among the few who recognised Jesus as the Messiah. The Apostle Peter expressed his conviction in these words: ‘*Thou art the Christ (anointed) the Son of the living God.*’ *[Matthew 16.16]* After the resurrection, the disciples expected Jesus to fulfil those prophetic words of Isaiah

and to re-establish the kingdom of Israel. They had overlooked the real meaning of Christ's mission as a saviour and they needed to be reminded of the Divine time-scale. The Gospel message, the good news of the kingdom of God, would be preached to all nations so that men and women who were not Jews by birth could share this great Christian hope and look forward to the return of Jesus to set up the kingdom of God on earth. So turning to the teaching of Christ we see a consistent theme throughout the Gospel records. His prophetic message consisted of preaching the Gospel. [Matthew 9.35; Luke 8.1]

JESUS - THE TEACHER

Part of Christ's teaching was by parables - stories from everyday life with a special meaning, to be discerned only by those who were willing to accept Jesus as the Messiah, and were prepared to be his disciples. Again the message of the parables was consistent with his other teaching. Many of them commenced with similar words: *'The kingdom of heaven is like...'* Even the twelve Apostles could not understand the full meaning of the parables, else they would have realised that it was not the right time for his kingdom to be established.

One of the parables opens with these words:

'...He (Jesus) added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.' [Luke 19. 11,12]

You may know this story which is called the parable of the pounds. The nobleman distributed money to his servants with the instruction *'Occupy till I come.'* Some used their wealth wisely in their master's service; others did not. However, all of them had to give an account to the nobleman on his return. There are important lessons for us in this teaching which we will come back to. It illustrates well the time-scale of God's plan. The nobleman is Jesus who has gone away and left his servants to apply themselves diligently in their master's service until he comes again.

In the main, the Jews of Christ's day did not recognise him at all, and eventually they took him and put him to death like a common criminal. Some who did recognise him as the Messiah, overlooked those prophecies written in the Psalms and Isaiah, [eg Isaiah chapter 53] which foretold his suffering and death. Only a short while after telling that parable, the people shouted as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, fulfilling yet another Old Testament prophecy. [Zechariah 9.9]

They cried:

'...Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord:
peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.' [Luke 19.38]

A PROPHECY POINTING FORWARD TO TODAY

Jesus subsequently enlightened his disciples concerning the times to come, when the nobleman would no longer be with them. His teaching in Luke's record is worthy of our attention, for it bridges the gap between his first advent and his future work. Christ was truly the greatest of all the prophets. He was the Son of God, destined to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the 21st chapter he gives a number of clear indications of the time of his return, in answer to the disciples question, '*Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?*' [Luke 21.7]

The reply of Jesus was two-fold. The first part consisted of a short-term prophecy concerning the overthrow of the city of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews throughout the Roman Empire. [Luke 21.24] The fulfilment of this prophecy is now ancient history. The Romans sacked Jerusalem in AD 70. The Jews were sold as slaves and their land became desolate, remaining in that state for nearly nineteen centuries: '*trodden down of the Gentiles*' as Jesus predicted. How does this fit in with the Gospel message concerning the restoration of Israel and the setting up of the kingdom of God? Jesus tells us in the same verse - the treading down of Jerusalem is for a limited period - '*until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*' [Luke 21.24] Yes, this is a long-term prophecy, worthy of our careful attention. One hundred years ago there was no sign of a Jewish revival - yet what do we see today? - The Jews are back in that land promised to their ancestor Abraham. They have returned from all over the world as the Word of God predicted. This is a momentous sign of the nobleman's return - the greatest sign of all and a source of encouragement for the disciples of Christ particularly in this age, who can look forward with eager anticipation to the fulfilment of God's plan for the world.

In that day of the nobleman's return, he will call his servants together, as we learn from the parable and will require an account of their service. Jesus has set us an example in his life, in his teaching and commandments. If we are truly to be his disciples there is a path to follow. Jesus said '*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*' [John 15.14] On another occasion he said '*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*' [Mark 16.16] If we believe the Gospel of the Kingdom and comply with the Divine command to be baptised, we will have taken two great steps towards our goal.

Colin Dryland
London, England

Jesus

- The Priest

A KEY ELEMENT of the work of Jesus on earth 2,000 years ago, was to teach the people about the coming kingdom of God. This article focuses attention on the role of Jesus as a priest. However, to begin with, it is important to see the relationship between these two aspects of the work of Jesus. The role of a priest is summarised by God when describing the characteristics of one of Israel's priests:

'The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.' [*Malachi 2.6,7*]

GUIDANCE BY THE PRIEST

Thus a key aspect of the priest's work was to teach the people the Word of God. However the work of the priest is more than being a teacher, more than imparting just academic knowledge. The teaching of the priest from the Word of God should be directed at turning men and women away from iniquity, and towards an understanding and appreciation of what God wants us to do.

The work of the priest referred to in the above quotation is continued in the following passage:

'...because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.' [*Numbers 25.13*]

The concept of atonement is one which occurs regularly in the Bible. Indeed it is one of its major themes, yet it is a word which has almost disappeared from everyday use. To understand the work of a priest in general and Jesus as a priest in particular, we need to understand what atonement means. The concept of atonement is seen in the incident referred to in the quotations given above. The people of Israel had gravely disobeyed God's law, they had worshipped false gods and indulged in sexual immorality on a widespread basis. Such a blatant disregard for God's law is what the Bible calls 'sin', another word that is falling out of regular usage. However, the Bible tells us the consequences of sin:

'...the wages of sin is death...' [*Romans 6.23*]

The priest referred to in this incident was a man called Phinehas whose prompt action turned away God's anger from Israel. The narrative records the Divine comment:

'Phinehas...hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.'

[*Numbers 25.11*]

The incident considered has brought before us a number of principles:

1. God cannot tolerate man's wickedness and his continuing disregard for Divine law.
2. Without some form of intervention, God's righteous judgements would be carried out on man.
3. The role of the priest is to provide this necessary intervention to save men from the consequences of their disobedience or 'sin.'
4. The role of the priest is also to teach men to follow God's way more closely.

MAN'S FALL IN THE BEGINNING

The work of the priest is vitally important, since the teaching of the Bible and the experience of life, reveal to us that in general man has a tendency to please himself rather than please God. This has been the case right from the beginning. The book of Genesis tells us that when God had created man, He



Model of Herod's temple in Jerusalem

'That he may be merciful and faithful high priest' [*Hebrews 2.17*]

tested him by instructing him not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, on pain of death. Man chose to ignore the warning, preferring to believe the lie of the serpent.

As a result, God's pronouncement came upon man:

'...in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'
[*Genesis 2.17*]

In one of his epistles the Apostle Paul comments:

'Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' [*Romans 5.12*]

Here are some clear principles laid down by God. Because of sin, a man must die and all men are sinners. This sets before us a rather gloomy prospect. So much so, that men have tried to perpetuate the serpent's lie by saying man does not really die, but his immortal soul lives on. This is not the teaching of the Bible. Death is the end, except for the hope of God's provision of a saviour, to

save people from their sins and thus provide a way to eternal life. John the Baptist said of Jesus on one occasion:

‘...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ [John 1.29]

Soon after, the people of Samaria gave this testimony of Jesus:

‘...We believe...and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’ [John 4.42]

In what way did Jesus take away sin? How did he save the world? It is clear that men and women still sin against God, and die as a consequence of sin. However, as we shall see, Jesus has provided the way to have our sins covered and to escape the consequences of the Divine punishment for sin.

To understand this aspect of Christ’s work, we need to go back in the Bible to find out how God has revealed His principles to man. In Old Testament times, God’s will was made known through what is called the Law of Moses. This Law revealed a code of behaviour and morality which, if followed, would result in Divine favour and blessing. The Law covered every single aspect of life, but it was impossible for men to keep it perfectly in all its detail and so they sinned against God’s law. Thus it was that the Law made provision for a man to recognise his failings, and to approach God for forgiveness. This approach to God required the killing of an animal. It was in recognition of the Divine judgment that death is the consequence of sin and that in reality, the offerer was the one who deserved to die. The problem was that man continually broke the regulations of the Law and as a result, came under the condemnation of the Law. Thus there was a continuing need for sin to be recognised, repented of, sacrifices offered and Divine mercy sought.

JESUS - THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

The weakness of the Law as outlined above, leads us to the conclusion that the only way to break this circle of sin and death was for someone to lead a life which was in perfect obedience to God’s will, ie a life which was sinless. It was just such a life that Jesus led, a life, which meant that although he died on the cross, the power of death could not hold him. Therefore God raised him from the dead and gave him eternal life. Jesus’ life of obedience was more than a personal triumph. It was a triumph in which all of us can share. The sacrifices of the Law of Moses were not effective in covering sin permanently - the animal itself had no conscious awareness of good or bad. The death of the animal merely reminded the offerer of his own subjection to sin and death and his

reliance on God's mercy. By contrast, the willing offering of the life of Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, a life unworthy of death being freely given for the benefit of others.

This contrast is summarised in the following verses from Hebrews:

'...every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.'

[Hebrews 10.11-14]

From this passage we see that Christ fulfilled a dual role, being both the priest and the sacrifice. The quotation given above shows that it was the work of the priest to act on behalf of the sinner and through the medium of sacrifice, intercede with God. The main difference between the priesthood under the Law of Moses and that of Christ is that Jesus does not need to offer a sacrifice every time we approach God through him, for forgiveness. His life of obedience offered on the cross is a permanently effective sacrifice, which can cover all sins.

Just because Christ's death can cover all our sins, it does not mean that we can presume on the effectiveness of that sacrifice, if we do not strive to be like Christ in our lives. There is an on-going need to examine our way of life and turn away from anything we know that would bring God's disapproval. God speaking through the prophet Ezekiel is very explicit:

'When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right...he shall not die.'

[Ezekiel 33.13-15]

JESUS WAS OF OUR NATURE

Further, calling ourselves a Christian does not stop us from sinning. It does not relieve us of the danger outlined by Ezekiel of turning away from God's way and so losing the hope of God's offer of salvation. This is where the greatness of Christ's priesthood lies. Jesus was born sharing the same human nature as all of us, sharing the same temptation to serve himself rather than God.

Referring to Christ's priesthood, we read in Hebrews:

'...he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham...it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest...to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.'

[Hebrews 2.16-18]

So then Jesus is a sympathetic priest, one who really understands the problems we have in trying to serve God. The section in Hebrews goes on to say:

'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

[Hebrews 4.15,16]

This verse is important, since it shows that there is nothing passive about our relationship with Christ as our High Priest. We have to pray to God, through Jesus, confessing our faults and asking for forgiveness. If our attitude is right, we can be bold in that approach, since God has assured us that He will listen.

The Apostle John wrote:

'...if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.'

[1 John 2.1-12]

In conclusion, we have seen that through the work of Jesus Christ as High Priest, our sins, if truly repented of, are forgiven by God. This opens up a wonderful prospect for us, as outlined by Paul in writing to the Romans:

'But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

[Romans 6.22,23]

Stephen Irving
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Jesus

- The Perfect Sacrifice

HOW COULD A man, stripped naked and writhing in agony as he hung crucified with huge nails driven through his hands and feet, be the perfect answer to anything, much less to the greatest of all problems facing the human race? Death for Jesus would be certain, and before long the land in which he laboured so faithfully would seek him in vain. Such inflicted torture was not uncommon where the Roman legions were in control. It might well be looked upon as just another demonstration of human barbarity - a vicious outburst of vengeance against a chief offender. There had been a trial, if it could be called that. The charges brought against him were not worthy of death in the opinion of those who had the duty to judge the matter. Yet the implacable determination to have him destroyed was so urgent that a sentence of death was wrung from a reluctant ruler. [*Matthew Chapter 27*]

Why did their anger burn so hot against him? Why did he not escape arrest when he had the chance? Why did he not resist? He could have, with a word, rallied to his side, '*more than twelve legions of angels.*' [*Matthew 26.53*] Where was God in all this? Was Jesus His only begotten Son? Was he dearly loved? What was the will of the Father that he was so intent on keeping? [*Matthew 26.42*]

A NATION IN TURMOIL

At the time, the Jewish nation had been in considerable turmoil, a very

powerful organisation of 'religious leaders' had developed around the 'Law of Moses.' This Law had regulated nearly every facet of domestic life for nearly 1,500 years and had strictly formulated the worship of their God, whom they believed had brought them up out of the land of Egyptian bondage. These 'leaders' alone felt competent to deal with all religious questions and reserved to themselves the right to interpret the Scriptures kept in their custody. But certain of the Jewish prophets had predicted the coming of a Messiah and had spoken of times and places which would be involved in this long anticipated event. [*Daniel 9.26, Micah 5.2*]

It was into this rigid and dogmatic atmosphere, charged with an air of expectancy, that Jesus stepped forward with his claim of Messiahship. Was he the one which was to come, or was he not? Some said he was, others said he was an imposter. [*John 7.40-46*] This was the question which would fill the land with violent debate for three and a half years and few would escape the bitterness of division which would cleave asunder even the closest of family relationships. [*Matthew 10.34-36*] Jesus soon became widely known throughout Judaea. Huge crowds from all walks of life began to follow him, seeking relief from the illnesses which caused so much suffering and to hear him speak of a coming kingdom. They wanted to know how they could be a part of that future age when he would be a great King, sitting on the throne of David, his ancestral father. [*Luke 1.32*]

But the concentration of power in these 'leaders' was not a happy picture. Their traditions had all but obscured the spiritual intent of the Law [*Matthew 15.6*] and human greed had found a fertile field in which it could thrive. They were not only jealous of their status but highly protective of the ease and luxury with which they were surrounded. Jesus was a growing threat to this system of human hierarchy. The conflict raged. Bitter hatreds seethed under the public humiliations they suffered. Time after time they were put to silence at the hands of a poor carpenter whose mighty deeds of miraculous benefit [*John 11.47,48*] could not be denied, and whose words they could challenge only at the peril of their reputation before the people. [*Mark 11.18*]

DESPISED AND REJECTED

Wounded pride seeks vengeance. In envy there was refuge and a plot to kill. They despised him more each day, as they saw their lofty positions undermined. They could not, they dare not rest until they saw him lifted up

on a cross as the worthy victim of Roman justice. '*It is finished,*' cried Jesus, and his head fell forward in the welcome release of death. [John 19.30] He would not feel the Roman spear which pierced his side. [John 19.34]

In all this, who was victorious? The lifeless body of Jesus was taken down and placed in a nearby tomb. The rock which covered the entrance was tightly sealed. It is not recorded, but one might suppose that those who mocked this dying man would meet in joyous celebration.

Fortunately, the account does not end there. After three days Jesus was restored to life and he appeared frequently to many of his followers. No longer would their fears and shattered dreams fill them with disappointment. The scars on his hands, his feet and his side could not be denied. [John 20.24-28] After forty days, Jesus ascended into the heavens. A cloud enveloped him and he disappeared from human sight. [Acts 1.9] Time passed quickly and in a few years it was a different story in the city of Jerusalem. In a comparatively short time it lay in ruins. Many thousands of its inhabitants were slain by the Romans and those who survived were dispersed throughout the then known world, to suffer the consequences of their own request: '*His blood be on us, and on our children.*' [Matthew 27.25] For Jesus, the keeping of his Father's will had been the perfect answer.

THE WILL OF THE FATHER

Close association with their risen Lord would give his disciples a much needed opportunity to see and understand many things which had before seemed so difficult and perplexing. They could now begin to make sense out of what had taken place. They could begin to appreciate what was accomplished and see the reason for the precise way in which it needed to be done. Jesus was alive but much more than this, He was now immortal and demonstrated the characteristics of Spirit nature. [John 20.19] He was exalted to his Father's '*right hand,*' [Hebrews 1.3; 12.2] there to act as a High Priest [Hebrews 9.11,12; 8.1,6] and mediator for those who came to God through him. As in Adam, all the human race had been under '*the law of sin and death,*' [Romans 8.2] so now in Christ, all who believed and obeyed the Truth, were under '*the law of the Spirit of life.*' [Romans 8.2] All power and authority has been given to Jesus [Matthew 28.18] while he awaits the time when he shall return to this earth and set up his kingdom here. [Acts 3.20,21]

Jesus alone was capable of assessing the situation. His opinion of **what** happened and **why** it had to happen, is the only correct explanation of those events of which he was the central part. He saw the reason why his Father had to intervene in the way so tenderly described in the Gospel record [*Luke Chapter 1*] and beget him of our **exact** nature. [*Romans 8.3; Hebrews 2.14*] It then required him to live a life of perfect obedience - a perfection of character forged under the extreme pressures of temptation and even a death by crucifixion. It was the only way the '**power of sin**' could be broken [*Romans 8.3*] in our nature which was condemned to death because of sin. [*Genesis 3.19*] Jesus saw the reason why the Father required his blood to be shed. [*Hebrews 9.22-28*] It was the **only** way sin could be covered and a righteousness [*Romans 3.1926*] imputed to mankind on the basis of faith, separate entirely from a '**Law**' which the flesh, because of its weakness, could not keep. [*Romans 4.13-25*]



A horned altar found at ancient Beersheba

'So Christ was offered to bear the sins of many' [*Hebrews 9.28*]

Jesus understood the problem which had to be solved and this was the reason he was successful in solving it. The '**power of death**' [*Hebrews 2.14*] could not be destroyed until '**sin**', its cause, was removed. He knew that he

himself depended upon the blood of the covenant. [*Hebrews 7.21-28*] He knew his Father loved him and that what would be accomplished in his death was the greatest act of mercy and love his Father could show toward mankind. [*John 3.16*] Jesus declared the righteousness of God. [*Romans 3.25*] He believed in the end result of his suffering. '*...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*' [*Hebrews 12.2*]

Like those who crowded around Jesus when he went about preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, we too want to have a part with him when he comes again. This time he will come as a great King. [*Luke 1.32,33*] All the world will be under his control and supervision, and his servants who have been faithful to him down through the ages will be restored to life [*Daniel 12.2; John 5.28,29*] and will be given the gift of God which is eternal life. [*Romans 6.23*] They will rule and reign with him upon this earth. Death will have no more dominion over them. [*Luke 20, 35,36*]

THE PERFECT ANSWER FOR US

This is how the 'perfect answer' for Jesus can become the 'perfect answer' for us. God's love could not and would not flow toward those whose lives were orientated in sin; [*Romans 8.7,8*] but it could and would, flow toward those who could see the love of the Father in providing a 'sinless lamb' who could take away the sin of the world. [*John 1.29-36*] One who could **represent** us in a process, which would restore us to the loving relationship which the Father desired. [*1 Timothy 2.4*] This process is called redemption, [*Romans 8.23; Hebrews 9.12*] and it operates on the principles of faith [*Hebrews 11.6*] and obedience. [*John 15.14*]

It is written that '*without faith it is impossible to please him*' (God), and faith is described by Paul as a full persuasion of the things God has promised. [*Hebrews 11.1*] If we know and believe these things, then we can have a righteousness imputed to us just like it was to Abraham. We can then follow Jesus through the same process which won for him the great victory over sin. We can '**die**' to sin in principle and be '**buried**' just like he was. This is done in water and is called baptism. [*Romans 6.3-12*] When we arise out of this 'symbolic grave' we are styled new creatures [*2 Corinthians 5.17*] and are said to be '*in Christ*.' If we are '*in Christ*' then we become heirs to the promises just like Abraham. [*Galatians 3.26-29*] The 'perfect answer' for Christ becomes the

'perfect answer' for us. If death should overtake us before our Lord returns, it holds no fear, for he had demonstrated his power over the grave many times. [*John 11.1-44*] We shall but sleep, [*1 Thessalonians 4.13-16*] unaware of passing time, until we 'hear his voice.' [*John 5.28,29*] If we have 'done good' then we shall come forth 'unto the resurrection of life' and be made 'equal unto the angels' to die no more. [*Luke 20.36*]

For Jesus, the shame and the indescribable agony leading up to his death, were all deliberate choices he made. [*John 10.11-18*] He chose not to escape arrest. He chose not to resist or ask for the twelve legions of angels to deliver him. He chose not to raise his voice in self defence, nor did he plead with Pilate or Herod to release him. His love for his Father and for those whom he would redeem with his willing sacrifice was the driving force that led him to do what he did. Nothing was a matter of chance. Nothing was the result of man's will, prevailing over his. There was no tragedy or humiliating defeat. Instead, a mighty, splendid and glorious victory. [*Acts 2.22-24; 4.9-12*] Who can measure the praise and thanksgiving of those who through the trial of their faith 'endure unto the end' [*Matthew 24.13*] and who at last are with Jesus in his kingdom? He will look upon the travail of his soul and be satisfied [*Isaiah 53.11*] and the redeemed of mankind will respond with that great song of praise:

'...Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.' [*Revelation 5.9,10*]

Tom Mitchell
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Jesus

- The King

LET US TAKE our minds back almost 2,000 years. Rome was the ruling power in the land of Israel - they called it Palestine. Pontius Pilate was the official appointed by Rome as the governor of the province of Judaea.

THE FUTURE KING ON TRIAL

It was this man, Pontius Pilate, that presided over the mockery of a trial of Jesus from Nazareth. It was Pilate who asked Jesus during his trial, *'Are you a king then?'* [John 18.37 NKJV] As we study the Gospel records of these events, we see, perhaps, a certain amount of confusion in the mind of Pilate over the things that were being said about Jesus. He had listened as the chief priests accused Jesus of *'perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King.'* [Luke 23.2 NKJV] It was this claim, that Jesus was a king, that worried Pilate.

It seems he rejected the lies of the priests about *'perverting the nation'* and *'forbidding to pay taxes'* but he wanted to know more of this assertion that Jesus was a king. As a Roman, he did not seem to be all that conversant with the Jews' religious life. In fact, when Pilate put the question to Jesus, *'Are you the King of the Jews?'* and Jesus answered, *'Are you speaking for yourself on this, or did others tell you this about me?'* Pilate retorted, *'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me - what have you done?'*

[John 18.33-35 NKJV]

This seems to indicate that the Roman Procurator was not too familiar with the Jews' religious or prophetic writing. It was either that, or he couldn't be bothered! Pilate would have had advisers at his disposal, he could have adjourned the trial to find out about Jesus and this claim - but for him, there wasn't time. He had a riot on his hands - a mob being stirred up by those evil

chief priests! So, despite the fact that Pilate knew that the chief priests had handed Jesus over because of envy [Mark 15.10 NKJV] - he delivered Jesus to be crucified - to gratify the mob - to placate these evil priests and to protect his own position with Rome.

THE FUTURE KING - CRUCIFIED

So this man, Pontius Pilate, has gone down in history as the man who passed sentence of death on Jesus of Nazareth - the Messiah - the Son of God. He put aside his own repeated opinion that he could find no fault nor evil in this man. He ignored his wife's plea to *'Have nothing to do with that just man'* [Matthew 27.19 NKJV] and sentenced Jesus to a cruel barbaric death! Pilate also ignored the answers Jesus gave to his question, *'Are you a king then?'* [John 18.37 NKJV] If he had been a Jew, he would have known something of the prophecies that foretold of a coming Messiah. Therefore, when Jesus answered him, *'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause was I born, and for this cause I have come into the world.'* [John 18.37 NKJV] - he would have recalled that the Hebrew scriptures spoke of a restoration of the original kingdom of Israel, that they spoke of a man in the kingly line of David who would restore the kingdom and throne. There were Jews around at that time who knew and recognised that the claim of Jesus to be the heir to David's throne was justified.

THE FUTURE KING AND NICODEMUS

Nicodemus was one of the ruling Pharisees who had seen earlier in the preaching campaign of Jesus, that in this man from Nazareth, was somebody extraordinary. Nicodemus had come to Jesus and recognising the power that Jesus possessed, said to him, *'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.'* [John 3.2 NKJV] This conversation that Nicodemus had with Jesus was a revelation for him, and for all of us who study God's Word, because we see that, as Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of being *'born again'* through baptism, [John 3.5-7 NKJV] he too seemed confused. Here was a Pharisee - a religious leader - a Jew, who at that time did not seem to understand God's purpose with the promised Messiah, because Jesus said to him, *'Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?'* [John 3.10 NKJV] So, even though he was a ruler and teacher of the Jews - he didn't know the plan that God had laid out in the Holy Scriptures for salvation.

The conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus brings out the events that had to take place as prophecy required and also why the weak Pontius Pilate was the Roman official put there at that time. We see that Jesus goes on to speak to Nicodemus about the Son of Man being '*lifted up*,' [John 3.14 NKJV] - fixed to a stake, the crucifixion had to happen according to scripture. [Numbers 21.8,9 NKJV] Jesus then explained to Nicodemus that all this was necessary to bring salvation to mankind. Jesus said these words to Nicodemus that focus our minds on God's purpose through Jesus:

'For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.' [John 3,16,17 NKJV]

Here we see Nicodemus, a master in Israel, given a lesson in the Hebrew scriptures he held so dearly. The lesson was that 'The Messiah' or 'The Anointed One' had to die as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

The importance of the teaching of Jesus was not lost on this man, because we read later that he came with Joseph of Arimathea to take the body of Jesus and lay it in the tomb! [John 19.38-40 NKJV] We wonder though, what was in the minds of these two men as they saw the tomb sealed and a guard set over it. [Matthew 27.66 NKJV]

Their thoughts were probably the same as Cleopas and his companion as they made their way to Emmaus later and were relating the sorrowful events about Jesus to a 'stranger' who joined them on their way - '*we were hoping that it was he [Jesus] who was going to redeem Israel.*' [Luke 24.21 NKJV] This must have been very much in the minds of all the followers of Jesus - they were the ones who were confused now and saddened - their hopes for the redemption of Israel were shattered by the crucifixion - what were they to do now?

THE FUTURE KING - THE RESURRECTION

These two disciples also told this '*stranger*' that when the women had gone to the sepulchre to further tend the body of Jesus, the stone had been rolled away and the body had gone. The women had also told a story about seeing a vision of angels - who said that Jesus was alive! What were they to make of this?

If Christ was alive, where was he? What were they to believe? The 'stranger' who had been listening to this sad tale now suddenly turns on them and points out to them that, as Jews, they should have known what their holy scriptures taught:

'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.' [Luke 24.23-27 NKJV]

Christ the anointed king, was there with them. He was alive, talking to them, eating with them and reminding them of **all** that the Hebrew scriptures said about him. These events, though sad, had to come about exactly as they did, to fulfil and to confirm God's promises. Now it was as if a veil was lifted from their eyes - all was revealed - no more sadness; confusion was replaced with joy and gladness! These disciples of Jesus could see now what those ancient laws with their symbology and all those prophecies meant. They **all** pointed forward to **Christ the Anointed One**, and that many of them had been fulfilled in his death and resurrection.

THE FUTURE KING - A MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD

We find Peter later in Jerusalem, at the Feast of Pentecost with the other eleven disciples, boldly proclaiming to the gathered Jews:

'Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know - Him, **being delivered by the carefully planned intention and fore-knowledge of God**, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it.' [Acts 2.22-24 NKJV]

To Peter, the man who denied Christ, it was all now so clear, God planned it all. God used lawless men to achieve His purpose in making Jesus a sacrifice! Peter then launched into quoting copiously from the Hebrew scriptures written by King David a thousand years before. Why did David write these things down? Peter explained:

'...being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Christ (the Anointed) to sit on his (David's) throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that his soul was not left in Hades, (the grave) nor did his flesh see corruption.'

[Acts 2.30,31 NKJV]

So, as Peter informed his audience, the holy writings were being fulfilled by God through Jesus - the question comes, where is he now and what happens next? Well, Peter told them, the Anointed One is *'exalted to the right hand of God'* [Acts 2.33 NKJV] and he then quoted more of the Hebrew scriptures from King David again:

'For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.' [Acts 2.34,35 NKJV]

We have then, clear teaching from Peter, referring all the time to the Old Testament scriptures, that Christ not only had to be slain as a sacrifice, but also that he would inherit King David's throne. Now, for that to happen, Israel as a nation would have to be restored with Jerusalem as the city of God.

THE FUTURE KING - HIS SECOND COMING

The plan of God was now becoming clear - there was to be a second advent of Christ. He was to sit at God's right hand for a period of time - **until** God brings his enemies low. Peter later went to the temple in Jerusalem and repeated the same message to the people, telling them to *'Repent therefore and be converted.'* [Acts 3.19 NKJV] Again, he talked of the second coming of Jesus - *'whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.'* [Acts 3.21 NKJV] How clear it all was now - all the prophets from Moses onwards, had spoken of Christ the Anointed, not only as a Saviour, but as a King also.

Peter said to the Jews present:

'You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed

all the families (nations) of the earth shall be blessed.'
[Acts 3.25 NKJV]

The clear, bold teaching of Peter, was later backed up by the Apostle Paul who showed just as clearly the only way the **blessings of all nations** could come was by the return of Christ, with power, to restore the nation and kingdom of Israel.

We find Paul later preaching boldly in Athens and declaring to them that Christ was **coming again** to set up his kingdom:

'...he (God) has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man who he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising him from the dead.' [Acts 17.31 NKJV]

Paul also made it clear in the letters he wrote to the early believers that this **blessing** of the reign of Christ was for **all** nations, not only the Jews.

'For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek...there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' [Galatians 3.26-29 NKJV]

THE FUTURE KING - TO RULE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

The importance of those words of Paul - that God has appointed a day when Christ will return to judge or rule the world in righteousness - must not be ignored by any who would follow Christ. The benefits of having an immortal righteous ruler on the earth are obvious. We see the age we live in full of injustice, inhumanity and ungodliness. These same scriptures tell us that Christ will reign on this earth with his throne in Jerusalem. Isaiah the prophet tells how *'it shall come to pass in the latter days...out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And shall rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'* [Isaiah 2.2-4 NKJV] These are the prophecies that the Apostles had in their minds when teaching about the second coming of Christ.



‘I will make the nations your heritage’ [*Psalm 2.8 RSV*]

Another prophecy from Isaiah reads like this:

‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, And the government shall be upon his shoulder... Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice...’ [*Isaiah 9.6,7 NKJV*]

THE FUTURE KING - TO SET UP A NEW WORLD ORDER

When the ‘Cold War’ came to an end, some of the world’s leaders talked about a ‘new world order’ and others talked of ‘peace dividends.’ In other words they hoped nations could now concentrate on disarming and spending their energy and wealth on peaceful pursuits.

But what has happened? We have seen Europe and Russia disintegrating into nationalistic factions, countries warring against each other. We have also seen the increase of racialism and religious intolerance, accompanied by terrible acts of violence! Is this the new world order we have been led to expect?

We put it to you that the **only hope** for mankind is in the hands of God. The early Christians were urged to look for and pray for the return of Christ to establish God's **new world order** - to put their trust in God - not in the sons of men.

The true followers of Jesus, God's anointed king, need not be worried by world problems - they are all a sign of the near return of Jesus. He spoke of a time of trouble, of fear, of perplexity, of distress of nations, prior to his coming. [Matthew 24.21-44; Luke 11.24-36 NKJV] Christ's followers were told to be ready and watching and not to be bothered by these world-wide problems.

The Apostle Paul assured the believers with these words:

'and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe...'

[2 Thessalonians 1.7-10 NKJV]

The last book of the Bible sets the final scene - the great climax of the Divine plan centred in the Lord Jesus Christ:

'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!'

[Revelation 11.15 NKJV]

The true benefits of Christ's reign will then be seen and enjoyed by all nations. We have shown that there were those who should have known better when Christ came the first time - if they had studied their Scriptures! We can only urge you to study God's Word also, to make sure you are able to see that the second coming of Jesus Christ is near, so that you may understand and recognise him when he appears.

'...for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with him are called, chosen, and faithful.'

[Revelation 17.14 NKJV]

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